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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL CALLS FOR RESTRAINT BY BURMESE
AUTHORITIES AND SUPPORTS BAN'S IMMEDIATE DISPATCH OF GAMBARI

REF: USUN 785

¶1. (SBU) Begin Summary: After an extensive, two-hour debate called to consider the events in Burma during closed consultations September 26, the Security Council authorized French PermRep Ripert, in his capacity as Council president, to deliver an oral statement to the press highlighting the following points: the members of the Security Council met to discuss the current situation in Burma; they expressed concern about recent events; they called for restraint and political dialogue; and they emphasized their support for SYG Ban's statement reporting his urgent dispatch of Special Envoy Gambari and call on the Burmese leadership to fully cooperate with his mission, including receiving Gambari as soon as possible. Although China, Russia and Qatar resisted issuing a Council statement to the press, Ambassador Khalilzad forcefully argued that because of the risk of escalation it was imperative the Council act now and offer public support for Gambari's engagement. End Summary.

Gambari Called to Security Council

¶2. (SBU) In response to the crackdown on demonstrations in Burma, French PermRep Ripert, in his capacity as monthly Council president, called for urgent consultations September 26. Ban's Special Envoy to Burma Ibrahim Gambari, who had briefed the Council September 20, relayed that the Secretary-General was urgently dispatching him to the region

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to offer the UN's willingness to assist Burma with national reconciliation. (NOTE: Gambari will travel September 26 to Singapore where he will await word from Burma as to whether he is granted access to the country. End Note.) Reporting on the demonstrations and the government's reaction, Gambari said: "Myanmar stands at a fork in the road." The leadership can "regress to past practices" of oppression or make the "brave but necessary choice" to overcome its challenges as one nation. Over the past twenty years, Gambari said, Myanmar, the region and the world had changed, and the Burmese authorities needed to take this transformation into account. He said they needed to allow the UN and the international community to help them take immediate steps to de-escalate tension and emphasize dialogue.

¶3. (SBU) Gambari also reported that he had met in New York with the visiting Burmese Foreign Minister, who claimed that the media was exaggerating the scale of the crisis. "Only 40,000 monks in Yangon had demonstrated (sic)." The Foreign Minister also claimed that opponents of the government had instigated the demonstrations, and that the Burmese authorities were exercising restraint. The Minister told Gambari that the future of Burma was in the hands of the Burmese government and people alone.

¶4. (SBU) Noting the risk of escalation and the need for the Council to encourage the regime to move away from violence,

Ambassador Khalilzad called for a strong statement condemning the violence, urging dialogue and a political settlement, including the release of political prisoners. The time to act is now, he said. He called on Burma's neighbors to facilitate Gambari's visit and access to Burmese authorities and opposition leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK). When faced with repeated resistance by China to a Council statement, Amb Khalilzad asked if the Council should be indifferent to the fact that Gambari currently lacked an invitation to Burma. He said: "In my view, we would not be doing our job if we wait for the Burmese authorities to 'stabilize' the situation by killing people. Then Mr. Gambari can come and visit the gravesites."

China, Russia, South Africa

15. (SBU) Chinese PermRep Wang reiterated China's longstanding position that Burma is not an issue for the Security Council because it does not affect international peace and security, as well as China's adherence to the principle of non-interference in another country's internal affairs. He commented that the situation in Burma was not clear, as there was only media coverage of the events. China hoped to see stability in Burma and progress on the road to democracy, Wang noted, but current events are a matter of internal affairs and he hoped that the Burmese government and people could "handle the situation." China, as a neighbor that shares a 4,000 km border, and ASEAN, are better placed to influence events in Burma. He also said that additional outside sanctions would make the country more inaccessible. Wang reaffirmed China's support for Gambari and the good offices mission, but opposed any Council statement or action.

16. (SBU) Russian PR Churkin also restated Russia's belief that Burma was not an appropriate issue for the Security Council as the situation does not threaten international peace and security. He concurred with Ambassador Khalilzad, however, that there should be no escalation in the violence and that there must be an open dialogue with all parties. Russia supports Gambari's efforts, he commented, but did not believe that a trip "during such disarray" would yield results. He concluded by calling on ASEAN to signal to Burma that it should apply the maximum restraint and restore order. He requested that Gambari convey the same message to both the opposition and the government leaders. In a short statement, South African PR Kumalo expressed support for Gambari's visit and for a call by ASEAN to exercise restraint. He said he thought Ban's statement adequately represented the views of the UN, and directly asked Gambari whether a statement by the Council would be helpful.

Council Reactions

17. (SBU) In a balanced statement, Indonesia echoed the Council's sentiments of support for Gambari. PR Natalagawa added that as a member of ASEAN, Indonesia urged Burma to exercise restraint and ensure a peaceful resolution to the situation. "Real progress must be made," he said. Panamanian PR Arias offered full support to Gambari and the good offices mission, adding that the Council cannot allow the crisis to turn to the mass killings of the past. He requested a formal Council meeting featuring presentations by Burma and all neighboring states, including China. Though expressing reservations unrelated to the issue at hand about whether the Council should issue a statement, Arias ultimately supported the effort.

18. (SBU) Qatari representative al-Qatani noted the difficulty of confirming events in Burma because of the limited information available. He agreed that Gambari should go to Burma as soon as possible, recommending that he work with "transparency and even-handedness." Though supportive of the mission, Qatani alleged that a press statement by the Council could be counterproductive, inspiring further unrest and security problems. He asked for clarification about reports that monks were abducting police and setting fire to

police vehicles (sic), and asked if the Council should act every time there is a demonstration overseas.

¶9. (SBU) The Ghanaian representative expressed support for action to prevent the escalation of the conflict and possible fatalities. He said that the Council should "look to Gambari and the countries in the region" given the differences in approach evident in the Security Council's discussions. Peruvian DPR Chaves argued there was more risk in Security Council silence on Burma than a public statement of support. He added that there were enough common elements among council members to release a general statement of support.

European Countries Speak out Strongly

¶10. (SBU) All European delegations spoke strongly in favor of a Council reaction. UK PermRep Sawers argued "now is the time to pull the regime back from the brink and call for reconciliation." He supported the Secretary-General's dispatch of Gambari, and recalled Ban's statement to the UNGA September 25 that "the age of impunity is dead." French PermRep Ripert read a statement that echoed French President Sarkozy on the need for a strong international response, including sanctions. Belgium PermRep Verbeke urged ASEAN partners to facilitate the Gambari mission by sending a strong message to the Burmese regime. Italian PermRep Spatafora concurred with Ambassador Khalilzad's recommendation that the Security Council has a responsibility to prevent the escalation of the crisis in Burma and needed to act. The Slovakian representative said the world is looking at the Security Council and waiting for a reaction in support of the people of Burma.

¶11. (SBU) In summing up remarks, Gambari responded to the South African PermRep's query about the utility of a Council statement. The Special Envoy said a statement that urges the Burmese authorities to exercise restraint and support my mission would be helpful. Gambari cited the statement issued by Singapore, the current chair of ASEAN, urging "the Myanmar authorities to admit Mr. Gambari into Myanmar and grant him full access to all players." With this reference to ASEAN support, Council members reluctant for Ripert to speak to the press about Gambari's urgent mission relented. Gambari also noted that he had no information about unlawful action by monks and commented that "of course we hold the authorities to a greater degree of accountability."

KHALILZAD